

Debate rages in Egypt as priest tells Christian women to cover up

Author:

Sat, 2019-05-11 23:32

CAIRO: "Why are women and girls coming to church if they're wearing revealing and inappropriate clothes?" That was the message of the sermon delivered by Father Daoud Lamei whilst presiding over an Orthodox Easter mass, celebrated by the Coptic Christian community in Egypt.

"I personally think any man, who agrees to his wife leaving her home in that way will be judged before God," Lamei added. "At least during Christmas, we don't have to worry because it is cold ... We want it to be cold always."

The priest's comments about revealing clothing have sparked a heated debate in the Coptic community. Some have criticized Lamei, while others supported his call for modesty in religious buildings.

"He is specifically attacking Christian women, not explaining the appropriate dress code and attitude for a church in general," said Maryan Youssef, a 19-year-old student. "Egyptian Christians wear decent clothes, and if some are not dressed properly they should be given guidance, but there aren't that many."

Hani Abdo, a religious teacher, said: "I fully agree with Lamei. I am a Christian man, and feel uncomfortable when I see Christian girls wearing inappropriate clothes in church. They are harassed in the streets." He said: "Christian girls must learn from nuns. The Church is a sacred house that must be respected."

Father Luke Rady of the Church of Marmina in Assiut, said: "We trust in our daughters and in their commitment to proper clothing."

Dr. Nabil William, a psychology teacher at the University of Assiut, said Christianity does not impose uniforms on anyone, but always calls for decency.

Following Lamei's comments, an online campaign called "Cover Up" was set up by Orthodox Copts, calling on women to wear more conservative clothes when in church. In addition, a group of worshippers at a church in Upper Egypt started a separate online campaign urging young women to dress modestly, which was vehemently criticized by Facebook users for its conservative language.

These campaigns have raised fears among some Christian women that they will be subjected to harassment for their outfits, restrictions on their personal freedom or forced to wear a prescribed uniform.

Lamei's remarks were dubbed "Christian Salafism" by Ishak Ibrahim, a researcher with the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights. Ibrahim said

such rhetoric hardened attitudes that would “justify harassment” of women simply for their attire. “There is a crisis in clerical education, and many clergymen end up tying piety to modesty,” he said.



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Muslims, Copts rebuild church destroyed in sectarian clashes in Egypt

[Palestinians want Jerusalem cut from Eurovision videos](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-05-11 22:36

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority called Saturday for Jerusalem to be cut from videos promoting Eurovision, accusing Israel of “propaganda” ahead of Tel Aviv hosting the song contest.

Israel’s public broadcaster KAN aired a clip Friday aimed at tourists traveling to the country for Eurovision, which features a shot of east Jerusalem’s Al-Aqsa mosque compound.

It also refers to Jerusalem as “our beloved capital,” despite Palestinians

claiming the eastern sector as the capital of their future state. East Jerusalem was occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed.

The PA's foreign ministry said Israel was using the song competition to "entrench its colonial occupation by effectively normalizing the global acceptance of its unlawful conduct."

"The promotional material published in the context of the Eurovision contest and approved by EBU, is unacceptable," the ministry said, in reference to the European Broadcasting Union.

Writing on Facebook, the ministry said it had contacted the EBU about what it termed Israeli "propaganda material" which "wipes... the State of Palestine from the map."

KAN's promotional video was also criticized by some Israelis for its portrayal of stereotypes, prompting the broadcaster to issue a statement stressing its take was satirical.

Eurovision will take place from Tuesday to Saturday in Tel Aviv, picked to host the event after Israeli singer Netta Barzilai won last year's contest. Efforts by activists calling for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel over its occupation of Palestinian territories have failed to move the competition.



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Gaza artists call on Eurovision singers to boycott Israel
Prankster who streaked across Eurovision stage could face 5-year jail term

Turkey urges end to regime attacks on Idlib

Author:

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1557569620406102100

Fri, 2019-05-10 18:53

ANKARA: Turkey on Friday called for an end to regime attacks on Idlib, accusing Damascus of seeking to extend its control of the province's south in violation of previously agreed boundaries.

Syrian regime forces together with their Russian allies have increased air strikes and shelling in the militant-controlled northwestern province since last April.

"We expect Russia to take effective and decisive measures to ensure regime forces end their attacks on the south of Idlib and the (forces) immediately withdraw to the borders agreed as part of Astana Process," Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said.

"The regime is trying to widen its area of control in Idlib's south in violation of the Astana agreement," Akar added, quoted by state news agency Anadolu.

He said the attacks were also a "risk" to Turkey's 12 military observation posts around the region.

Akar made his comments during a visit to the Turkish border with Syria, joined by top military commanders.

While Moscow backs Syrian President Bashar Assad, Ankara has called for his ouster and supports Syrian rebels in the civil war which began with anti-government protests in 2011.

Despite being on opposing sides of the war, Turkey has been working closely with regime backers Russia and Iran to find a political solution to the Syrian civil war.

Their talks have been known as the Astana process which was launched in early 2017 in the Kazakh capital now called Nur-Sultan.

A separate deal agreed by Moscow and Ankara last year aimed to set up a buffer zone around Idlib, and avoid a massive Syrian regime assault on the province.



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[Aid groups suspend aid to Syria's embattled northwest](#)

Author:

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1557566734706031700

Sat, 2019-05-11 09:13

BEIRUT: UN-linked aid groups have suspended activities in parts of violence-plagued northwest Syria, where stepped up bombardment by the regime and Russia is jeopardizing the safety of humanitarian workers.

"As of 8 May, at least 16 humanitarian partners have suspended their operations in areas impacted by conflict," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA said Friday.

The World Food Programme said it has suspended “deliveries to about 47,000 people in towns and villages... (that) have come under bombardment.” Since late April, government forces have mounted a major bombardment of southern Idlib and neighboring areas with Russian support. The uptick in air strikes and shelling on the region dominated by Syria’s former Al-Qaeda affiliate has displaced 180,000 people between 29 April and 9 May, OCHA said. It has also affected 15 health facilities and 16 schools, it added. “Some organizations suspended activities as their premises were damaged, destroyed or rendered unsafe by the violence,” OCHA said. “Others have suspended activities in order to keep their staff and beneficiaries safe, or because the beneficiary population has left,” it added. OCHA said five humanitarian workers, including two health professionals, have been reportedly killed due to air strikes and shelling. WFP also said that some of its partners inside Idlib have been “displaced due to the violence, while a few others have sustained injuries.” The northwestern part of Syria controlled by jihadists is made up of a large part of Idlib province, as well as adjacent parts of the Aleppo and Hama provinces. It has been protected from a massive regime offensive by a September deal inked by Damascus ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey. The region of some three million people has come under increasing bombardment since Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, which is dominated by jihadists from Al-Qaeda’s former Syrian branch, took full control of it in the beginning of the year. Western powers are concerned that the Russia-backed Syrian government will launch a full-scale assault. On Friday, air strikes and shelling killed 10 civilians, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The civil war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it started with the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011.



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Syria's Assad sets sights on Idlib, the final showdown? Anti-Kurdish protests in east Syria could endanger US plans

[Battle for Libya's Tripoli gives chance to Daesh](#)

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1557549460455744700

Sat, 2019-05-11 01:42

TRIPOLI: The battle for Tripoli between rival Libyan forces both championing the fight against "terrorism" has created a security vacuum, allowing the Daesh group a chance to re-emerge, analysts warn.

Libya expert Emad Badi says the fighting has given Daesh "the opportunity to reorganize, recruit and strike alliances with other groups (and organize attacks) to show they are still around."

Extremist groups capitalized on Libya's descent into chaos after the 2011

uprising that killed veteran dictator Muammar Qaddafi to establish a presence in the North African country.

Daesh had its main stronghold in Qaddafi's hometown of Sirte, east of Tripoli, until it was expelled from the Mediterranean coastal city in December 2016.

The group's demise came at the hands of forces loyal to the Tripoli-based internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), especially fighters from the western city of Misrata.

Those fighters are among pro-GNA forces now battling the self-styled Libyan National Army of military strongman Khalifa Haftar who launched an assault on Tripoli on April 4.

Haftar has vowed to "cleanse" Libya of jihadists and presents himself as the country's savior.

In 2017, he drove hard-line militants out of second city Benghazi after a three-year battle and ousted extremists from Derna, also in the east.

Then in January he launched an operation to "purge the south of terrorist and criminal groups" before setting his sights on Tripoli.

But despite being weakened, the extremists still pose a threat in oil-rich Libya, where they were blamed for around 20 attacks last year.

And over the past week Daesh has carried out two deadly assaults targeting Haftar's forces – on a training camp in the southern city of Sebha on May 4 that left nine dead and an attack Thursday in Ghodwa, also in the south, that killed two civilians.

Instability has reigned over Libya since the 2011 uprising, with rival political and military forces vying for power and fighting for the country's oil wealth and cities.

Extremist groups such as Daesh have fed on this chaos to grow, and divisions that persist as reflected by the battle for Tripoli only serve to bolster them, analysts say.

"The divisions give terrorists an unexpected opportunity to mobilize and reorganize," said Khaled Al-Montasser, a professor of international studies who lectures at Libyan universities.

After losing Sirte and Derna, Daesh was weakened but not totally defeated as its fighters withdrew to the country's remote and vast desert in the south or infiltrated coastal communities.

The threat militants pose was highlighted in a statement Thursday by the GNA, which also blamed Haftar's offensive for giving groups like Daesh another chance to regroup.

"GNA forces continue to repel the Haftar militias but their attacks... destabilize our country and allow terrorist groups like IS to re-emerge," it said.

Karim Bitar, director of research at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, draws a parallel with Syria and Iraq, where Daesh built a "caliphate" after a lightning offensive in 2014.

"In Libya, as in Iraq and Syria before it, IS took advantage of a vacuum... and the collapse of the state's structures to anchor itself," he said.

"As long as Libya is divided and as long as the state's sovereign authority is not re-established across the country, there is a risk that Daesh will be able to regain ground," he said.



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